

# Sarkozy's Turkey

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**Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave an interview to the French daily Le Figaro in advance of his visit to Paris for the closing ceremony of the "Turkey Season in France."**

Erdoğan told the newspaper that he would invite French President Nicolas Sarkozy to visit Turkey and if this comes to pass, he would be able to note that Turkey is more developed in some areas than many European Union countries.

The prime minister is right. For instance, Turkey meets the budget deficit criteria of the three Maastricht Criteria, which defines the euro currency. In fact, Turkey was ready to open the economic and monetary policy chapter relating to the euro in June 2007 but the Sarkozy administration blocked it. Indeed, Sarkozy let the Turkish government officially know in May 2007 that his administration would veto this chapter and four additional ones to block Turkey's full membership. Therefore France has defined the content of the so-called "privileged partnership" instead of full membership. Today, Sarkozy's France is the most serious obstacle to Turkey's membership, more than Cyprus, as this country never says, "Turkey cannot be a member."

Sarkozy doesn't want to change his mind on Turkey. Such stubbornness is nothing new. The president is the head of the executive in France. The last visit of a French president to Turkey took place in 1992. Turkish officials don't care about it, and keep visiting France despite the broken reciprocity chain. Good for them. But if French officials visit Turkey and start understanding and learning about the country, which they failed during the Turkey Season, their clichés may vanish and they feel that.

But it is useless to ignore and fear. The French right should consider revising its clichés by simply looking at the economic and cultural actors in France as well as hundreds of thousands of people who visited the Turkey Season activities. If Sarkozy visits Turkey in November as it seems, and if he brings along the living ex-presidents who never managed to come, the account will be settled.

## **On the constitutional amendments**

Turkey is trying to get rid of the military-inspired 1982 Constitution and for the first time, we are discussing a first-ever social contract with such freedom. Some 83 articles of the Constitution have been amended already. And if 26 articles in which the government seeks amendments are changed, half of the blueprint will have been modified.

Despite all these patches, however, the current Constitution is a straightjacket that doesn't fit the emerging Turkey. And except the Nationalist Movement Party, or MHP, everybody is convinced of the necessity of a new Constitution. As the problem is to balance out the excessive power of two pillars of the authoritarian mindset, the military and the judiciary, the fight has deepened. But the ongoing fight, contrary to the general feeling, is not about social polarization, it is about democracy and the fight for the very existence of a mature society.

Plus, both institutions are in crisis. Adding to the court cases for coup attempts and the Ergenekon crime-gang case on top of this, we truly need to fine-tune the constitutional amendment process. As we lost a historic opportunity to make a new Constitution following the 2007 general elections, the government's new attempt now looks too little and too late. For this reason, it needs to target the optimal benefit and be courageous. As for the courage, the government should look for the support of the most

populous group of people, the Kurds, who exerted efforts for change at least as much as the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, and its partisans.

Furthermore, although the previous amendments were presented as legislative packages in the past, this time it is necessary to group some comparable articles for referendum. By doing so, the change camp's strength will be revealed. Otherwise, the present initiative for a constitutional change with its all errors, inconsistencies and contradictions runs the risk of being transformed into a vote of confidence for the ruling AKP and everyone except the Kemalist status quo could lose in the end.

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## **Sources**

Source : Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review, le 09.04.10